

## INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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PART IRELIGION

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INTRODUCTIONChurches in SARATOV

Congregations consist to a great extent of middle-aged and elderly women, but there is also a fair sprinkling of younger civilians and even servicemen. In fact, a small number of churches were re-opened in 1949 and 1950. In the winter of 1948 the Bishop (Arkhi<sup>Y</sup>~~Y~~) of SARATOV baptised a group of people in the river Volga. He had already obtained the tacit approval of the local Party authorities, and had been given what might be described as the protection of the Militia. As a result of exposure in the cold several people subsequently fell ill. The Party authorities received a reprimand and some of the officials were removed from their posts. (No details known). The general reaction of the populace to the baptism was one of mild amusement.

4. There is nothing in the Soviet Constitution forbidding church attendance. A member of the Komsomols or the Party whose attendance had been reported would, however, almost certainly receive a severe reprimand. If he continued to go to church he might be expelled.

Control of Church by Party

5. [ ] the Soviet Government are aware of the existing strength of religious feeling. Instead of risking further unpopularity by introducing new restrictions, they have decided to increase their hold over the clergy. [ ] the Party is now in firm control, and [ ] the majority of priests and dignitaries have become a useful instrument of Soviet propaganda. Party and/or security police informers are present at most church services and would soon report any subversive tendencies on the part of the priests. The apparent freedom granted to the Church in the U.S.S.R. is also effective propaganda in the West. As an illustration of how the State uses the Church to advance its own aims, [ ] during the Second World War if a Party official asked a citizen for a financial contribution to the war effort he was usually refused, whereas the same request from a priest would usually be granted.

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/Rumours .....

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NOTED CONTINUED CONTROL  
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Rumours

6. [ ] the following rumours [ ] were fairly widespread:

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In the U.S.S.R.

- (a) During the Second World War many Baptists refused on religious grounds to take up arms. As a result some were shot, others sent to labour camps.
- (b) Members of some kind of Protestant sect (referred to [ ] as "Evangelisty") are believed to hold clandestine prayer-meetings.
- (c) A warrant officer of the 16th Independent Rifle Brigade in SARATOV, who had signed on for extended army service ("Sverkharochnyy") and was a Party member, married in church. As a result he was expelled from the Party and demobilised.

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(Note: Only "Sverkhsrochnyy" may be demobilised as punishment for such behaviour; a normal serving soldier could not be demobilised in such cases).

In Germany

7. When a group of soldiers were taking baths a crucifix was found on one of them. No action was taken against the man, but he was ridiculed by most of his fellow-soldiers.

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